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THE CONFLICT OF EAST AND WEST IN EGYPT.

I.

From Mehemet Ali to Ismail.

IT was not until the purchase of the Suez canal shares by Great Britain, in 1875, that the conflict to be described was waged with spirit. The influences and interests of the East and West, however, had clashed for many years. Long before the dawn of the nineteenth century the attention of England had been directed through Egypt to the far away Indian empire, that *El Dorado* that lured the British merchantmen to brave the storms of the southern seas. But the voyage 'round the Horn was a hazardous one and a long one; and the growth of commerce demanded that the Eastern empire should be made more accessible. England knew, and the world knew, that the direct route to India lay through the land of the ancient Pharaohs. England thought the way through Egypt should be overland; but France thought it should be by a canal that would one day connect the Mediterranean and the Red Seas.

France was interested in the valley of the Nile. She had put her foot there before England. The great Napoleon knew the value of Egypt. "By seizing and holding Egypt," he said, "I retain and command the destinies of the civilized world." And so, in 1798, he seized Egypt; but he did not hold it. The English, under Abercrombie, compelled the French to retire by the battle of Alexandria, in 1801. And now, for a short time, the influence of England was felt in Egypt. But it did not last long; for, after the accession of Mehemet Ali in 1805, Egypt was able to stand by herself. This event marks the starting-point from which it will be necessary to trace in brief the history and development of Egypt, in order to appreciate the government and condition of the country a decade ago, when England purchased the canal shares.

When the firman of the Sublime Porte made Mehemet Ali the governor of Egypt, in 1805, the country was in a state of feudalism. The pasha appointed by the Porte had been only the nominal ruler, the real government of the country being in the hands of the petty lords, or beys, known as the *memlûks*. They had deference neither for pasha nor for sultan. It is true that a small tribute was promised the Porte every time a new pasha was appointed; but it was almost never paid. The governors had been many since the beginning of the century. "Indeed," says Mr. Patton, in his history of the Egyptian Revolution, "all the pashas that intervene between the French rule and that of Mehemet Ali are a will-o'-the-wisp to the historian. A pasha of some sort flies before the eyes, but when we attempt to grasp him he is gone. . . . Thus successively rose and fell Mehemet Khûsuf Pasha, Tahir Pasha, Ali Pasha Gezairli, and Khurshid Pasha. Mehemet Ali alone stands out the distinct historical figure in the foreground."¹

The obscure Albanian owed his elevation to the pashalic to his success, while a Turkish commander, in quelling the dissensions among the *memlûk* beys. Once at the head of the government, he set to work in earnest to deprive them of their power, knowing full well that his position as the sultan's pasha would be at best both insignificant and insecure, so long as these feudal lords played fast and loose with the resources of the land. Until 1811, therefore, Mehemet Ali devoted himself to the suppression of the *memlûks*. Against this grasping for power England entered a feeble protest; not indeed because she sympathized with Egyptian feudalism, but because she happened, at that time, to fall out with the Porte, and desired, therefore, to help the sultan's enemies. She even sent troops to Egypt and took possession of Alexandria. But the occupation was brief; for Mehemet Ali descended from Upper Egypt, where he had been administering such correction to the *memlûks* as few absolute monarchs ever dared employ, and, proclaiming himself the champion of Islamism, he forced the infidels to

¹ A. A. Patton, F.R.G.S., *A History of the Egyptian Revolution to the Death of Mehemet Ali*, vol. ii., p. 14.

retire to Sicily. It now remained for the vigorous pasha to perform the two acts that consolidated his power throughout the valley of the Nile: the first was the revolutionary transfer to his own possession of the landed property of the entire country, and the second was the total extinction of the memlûks by massacre in the citadel of Cairo. The period of destruction was succeeded by one of development. The absolute ruler introduced modern military tactics and established a naval arsenal in Alexandria; he built canals; he introduced the culture of cotton, a product that was destined one day to become the source of enormous revenues; he imported also indigo, forest trees, fruits, spices, *etc.*, for reproduction; he founded medical and educational institutions; he improved the police and rendered travel safe, so that now, for the first time, passengers and letters bound for India were conveyed with perfect safety through Egypt overland to Suez.

But Mehemet Ali was not content with these undertakings and improvements, important and difficult as they were; he longed for greater power. He made war against the Wahabees of Arabia and he conquered the peoples of the Sûdan. And all the time he chafed under his subjection to the Porte. Finally he sent his warlike son, Ibrahim, to pick a quarrel in Syria; and Ibrahim captured Acre and was soon fighting against the troops of his father's suzerain and carrying all before him. It seemed as if Mehemet Ali was about to become the sultan of Egypt and Syria.

This was in 1832, a time when England was keeping a very watchful and a very jealous eye on Russia, ready at any moment to claim a foothold in Turkey. England thought that Egypt, being *against* Turkey, must be *for* Russia. From self-interest England could not allow her "ancient ally" to remain between two such fires; this Syrian flame must be quenched. England hesitated, however, to act, and in 1833 the Porte recognized the feudal sovereignty of Mehemet Ali over Egypt, Crete, Syria, and Adana, exacting only a small tribute. The peace did not last long, and in 1839 the Turks were again fleeing before the victorious Ibrahim. It seemed as if Asia Minor and Constanti-

nople must soon succumb to him. But now England intervened with an energy that was wanting in 1832. Her fleet joined those of Turkey and Austria off the coast of Syria, and confronted by British commanders on land and sea the troops of Ibrahim were forced to yield. The hopes of Mehemet Ali were blasted. His son had been overcome by England and he had been duped by France. Thiers promised an assistance that was never rendered.

The war at an end, the Powers endeavored to negotiate a treaty. After the usual diplomatic formalities and delays it was finally agreed that Mehemet Ali should evacuate Syria, Arabia, and Candia, and should receive the hereditary government of Egypt, acknowledging the sultan as his suzerain. The terms of this agreement were embodied in a firman issued by the Sublime Porte in 1841.

Mehemet Ali was now an old man, and during the remainder of his life the influences of his youth and early manhood, as is usually the case with those who have witnessed and participated in great governmental and social revolutions, predominated over the progressive spirit of his most vigorous and potent years. He became more of a despot than ever; and his severity had few of its former excuses. He did, however, permit an association of British merchants to organize a transportation service to India, through Egypt *via* Cairo and Suez, by means of which communication with India was made in weeks instead of months.¹

In 1847 Mehemet Ali's intellect began to weaken, and within a year his dotage had so increased that his son Ibrahim was installed pasha of Egypt in his place. But Ibrahim's rule was cut short by death two months later, and in December of 1848 Abbas was invested with the pashalic. In the summer of 1849 Mehemet Ali died, spent in mind and body. A good idea of the character and work of this "Napoleon of Egypt," as he has so often been called, may be gathered from the following quotation from Mr. Patton's history:

¹ William Holt Yates, M.D., *The Modern History and Condition of Egypt*, from 1801 to 1846.

There is much to be said in abatement of his merits. Although superior to a thirst for blood, from mere vengeance and resentment, and an easy pardoner of those who were no longer able to injure him, no compunction ever deterred him from removing the obstacles to his lawless ambition by fraud or force—most frequently by a compound of both. Nor was he able, with all his perseverance, to conquer his aboriginal want of education. Anxious to introduce European civilization into Egypt, he remained to the end of his life in utter ignorance of the economical principles upon which the prosperity of a state reposes. Greedy of the praise of Europeans, and, in the latter part of his career, anxious to count for something in the balance of military power, his allusions on this head showed to himself and to others the wide interval that separates the scientific organization of European military and political establishments from the Egyptian imitations which cost him efforts so lengthened and persevering. But although unable to resist the dictation of any European power, he was—within Egypt—all-potent in establishing an order that had never existed before, so as to afford those facilities that have proved so valuable to the Indian transit. He found Egypt in anarchy: and long before he had terminated his career the journey from the Mediterranean to Nubia was as secure as that from London to Liverpool. He learned to read, and attempted to write, after he had attained his fortieth year; and when we add that the practical result of his efforts was to leave his family in the hereditary government of Egypt, Mehemet Ali must be admitted to have been, without exception, the most remarkable character in the modern history of the Ottoman Empire.¹

Abbas Pasha succeeded Mehemet Ali. He preceded his uncle Said; for, by the then existing law of succession, the reins of government fell to the “eldest male of the blood of Mehemet Ali.” Abbas possessed neither the warlike impetuosity of his father Ibrahim, nor the ambition of his grandfather Mehemet Ali. He did not look beyond the bounds of Egypt for territory to acquire or for customs to imitate. It was enough for him that he was a good Mohammedan; that the wheat and millet fields throughout the valley of the Nile yielded their yearly increase; that the fellahin prospered and paid their taxes without the application of *kûrbash* and *bastinado*, and that there was peace among the people who acknowledged him their master. Though he did not court the favor of foreigners, he allowed an

¹ Patton, vol. ii., pp. 17 and 19.

English company to begin the construction of a railway from Alexandria to Cairo, which was to be continued across the desert to Suez. But he himself undertook no great works, built no new canals, and did not even carry out the schemes and plans of his predecessors. Abbas has been called a bigot and a miser. He certainly was neither liberal in mind nor lavish with money.¹ It is not surprising, therefore, that at his death he left a large sum of ready money in the Egyptian treasury. Perhaps this was known by those who are said to have strangled him. At all events, the money and the government passed to Said in 1854.

Said Pasha was a very different man from his nephew Abbas. Their tastes, their habits, their dispositions, their lives, and, consequently, their governments, were diametrically opposite. In fact Said was everything that his predecessor was not. Sociable, witty, extravagant, sensual, and fond of all the delights of life, he seemed rather the gay French courtier than the imperturbable Moslem ruler. He set up a court not unlike that of Louis XIV. He welcomed foreigners and entertained most lavishly. He forgot the sobriety enjoined by the Prophet, so that his dinners and his wines became famed for their richness and excellence. He accepted the suggestions of his foreign

¹ Abbas has had few defenders. Henry C. Kay, in *The Contemporary Review*, for March, 1883, says of him: "It is not my purpose to attempt the impossible task of justifying every act of his government. But, as a matter of justice and a fact of history, it ought to be stated that he was probably, though without the advantage of European education, the most able and the most efficient administrator the country has seen since the death of Mehemet Ali. He has met with the misfortune of having his reputation sacrificed for political reasons. French influence was supreme and practically unchallenged throughout the reign of Mehemet Ali. Abbas Pasha, on his accession, manifested a disposition to seek some measure of support from England. He added an Englishman to the French officials employed at his Foreign Office. He set about the construction, under the superintendence of English engineers, of a railway destined to connect Alexandria with Suez, an undertaking until then successfully opposed by France. He, moreover, placed his son under the care of an English tutor. The consequences may easily be understood. But the curious part of the matter is, that English writers, by constant repetition, one after the other, have done more to propagate erroneous views of Abbas Pasha's reign than those of any other nation, the French probably included. It is not my object to defend Abbas Pasha's private character, further than by adding that the generality of the stories told about him rest upon no better foundation than the merest gossip."

parasites, and hastened to adopt this scheme or that scheme, according as the whim of the hour or the persuasive agreeableness of the schemer might move him.

Among the foreigners attracted to Egypt at the beginning of Said's reign, was a man of larger and nobler purpose than these grasping tricksters knew. Ferdinand de Lesseps had formed an early friendship with Said, while acting as diplomatic *attaché* in Egypt years before. At that time, also, he had conceived a plan destined to revolutionize the commerce of the world. It was not a new plan, however. The scheme of constructing a waterway between the Mediterranean and Red Seas, had been suggested to all the great rulers of Egypt, the Pharaohs, the Persian, Greek and Roman conquerors, and the Arab caliphs. Also, according to recent discoveries in the archives of Venice, it seems that the project of cutting the isthmus was considered by the mariners of the fifteenth century.¹ A canal between the two seas *via* the river Nile actually existed for an unknown period in the dynasties of the Pharaohs, and again for a period of more than four hundred years under the Romans, and lastly for a period of more than a century after the Arab conquest. But Mehemet Ali, though he had considered, had not favored the great canal scheme, and Ferdinand de Lesseps was obliged, therefore, to await a more opportune time for broaching his plan. He brooded over his idea of a waterway while England secured the construction of a railway.

With the accession, now, of his old friend Said, the cherished hopes of de Lesseps were kindled to expectation. Nor was he deceived in believing that the opportune time had arrived. He went at once to Egypt and laid his plan before the viceroy. It was accepted by him on the 15th of November, 1854, in these words: "I am convinced. I accept your plan. We will talk about the means of its execution during the rest of the journey. [They were taking a Nile trip together.] Consider the matter settled. You may rely on me."²

¹ Robert Routledge, *Discoveries and Inventions of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 163.

² Ferdinand de Lesseps, *The Suez Canal*, p. 13.

The concession had no sooner been announced than English influence was brought to bear against the canal scheme. Mr. Bruce, the English consul in Egypt, told the viceroy that he was acting too hastily in the matter. At Constantinople Lord Stratford de Redcliffe threw obstacles in the way of the scheme, while in England the general attitude toward the canal was unfavorable, and even hostile. In January, 1855, the *London Times* declared against the proposed canal as an absolute impossibility. Lord Palmerston opposed the scheme from first to last. He held that the Porte must give its consent before the viceroy could allow the canal, forgetting that the English government had informed a former viceroy that he might construct a railway from Alexandria to Suez without the consent of his suzerain.

In February the sultan's council was on the point of granting the necessary permission, when Lord Stratford interposed his influence to produce delay. His lordship urged that the railway ought to be enough without any canal. He hinted to the Porte that a canal might so increase the importance of Egypt that the child would break with its parental authority. An influence also was brought to bear upon the viceroy, but probably not of so intense a kind as de Lesseps imagined; for he wrote at the time: "He [the viceroy] is even threatened with the displeasure of England, whose fleets might attack him when the business on the Black Sea is ended."

The whole matter had by this time assumed an international importance, with France at the head of the nations who favored the canal, and with England leading the opposition. Lord Clarendon, in communication with the French government, said that her majesty foresaw inconvenience in leaving the matter to be decided between the sultan and his viceroy. He submitted the following objections to the scheme: 1. The canal is physically impossible. 2. The project would require a long time for completion; it would therefore retard the projected railway and injure Indian interests. 3. Her majesty's ministers consider the scheme to be founded on an antagonistical policy on the

part of France toward Egypt. The same objections and arguments were repeated by Lord Palmerston.¹

All this time Said Pasha was harassed by doubts and fears; but at last, without receiving the authority of the Porte, and disregarding the attitude of England, he signed the final concession for the canal on January 5, 1856. It is said that he was influenced by the assurance that the canal would redound to his immortal honor and glory. Be that as it may, it is, in a measure, a monument to the generosity of the good-natured viceroy, whose name, at least, is perpetuated by the port at the Mediterranean terminus.

In 1858 de Lesseps launched his *Compagnie Universelle du Canal Maritime de Suez*, with a capital of £ 8,000,000. More than half of this amount was subscribed for—the greater part being taken in France—and in 1860 Said took up the remainder, amounting to £ 3,500,000. De Lesseps began the work in the spring of 1859, although the consent of the Porte was not given until 1866.

The attitude of England toward the canal remained unfriendly. When the engineering question had been settled, and the feasibility of constructing the canal proved, the English began to assert that it could not be made to pay. The policy of opposition has been kept up even to the present day. As the question of the canal is to be dismissed now, and to be taken up

¹ The whole policy of opposition, as manifested by England, is thus humorously, but faithfully summed up by Mr. D. Mackenzie Wallace, in his "Egypt and the Egyptian Question": "The consular representative of England does not approve the scheme, and warns his Highness against the insidious counsels of the plausible Frenchman. The cutting of a canal may be advantageous for humanity, or rather for that portion of humanity which happens to have a commercial fleet and seaports on the northern shores of the Mediterranean; but it would be ruinous for Egypt, because it would entirely destroy the lucrative transit trade, which might, on the contrary, be increased by continuing to Suez the Alexandria-Cairo railway. Then his highness must remember that Lord Palmerston—terrible name in those days!—is opposed to the scheme, not from selfish motives, but because he fears that it is merely a first step to a French occupation, by which, of course, his Highness would be the principal loser. Lastly, there is the little matter of physical impossibility. The most competent English engineers—and his Highness is too well-informed a man not to know that English engineers are much more practical and trustworthy than French ones—have declared with one accord that the proposed canal, if ever made, will remain merely a dry ditch." (p. 308.)

again only incidentally, as in its financial bearings upon the relation of England to Egypt, it may be well to notice how England has persisted in what appears a jealous opposition toward the *Compagnie Universelle*. A single quotation will show how the London papers sought to bring the canal into discredit at a time when its success was still a matter of doubt: "The Peninsular and Oriental Company's steamer 'Poonah,' with the Indian and China mails, which arrived at Southampton yesterday, experienced, while in the Suez canal, *a severe sand-storm, which commenced at sunrise and continued, more or less furious, until five in the afternoon*. During the storm she laid [!] right across the canal powerless. *Tons of sand were thrown on the deck*, and the masts and gear were covered with a thick coating." ¹

Of late years the British ship-owners have come to wish for a canal of their own, and they are inclined to dispute the claim of the *Compagnie Universelle* that it has the sole right to control the canal question until the ninety-nine years of the concession are up. The British government, however, advised by the lord chancellor and the law officers of the crown, has been forced to declare that the company's claim is well grounded. It is to England's credit that the opinions of such men as R. T. Reid, Q. C., M. P., prevailed. This honorable gentleman said:

The claim of M. de Lesseps and his company to equitable treatment is well known, and is more creditable to him than to the intelligence of our past rulers. The Suez canal is the work of his lifetime. He undertook it under circumstances of great discouragement. He completed it in spite of the disapproval of the British government. And when it has proved an immense success, and the navies of the world are reaping the benefit of his speculation, we are invited to find a flaw in his title, to chop logic as to the meaning of his concession, and to creep out of a difficulty which is a mere matter of pounds, shillings, and pence, by refining upon words in defiance of the intention. Such conduct would be unworthy of the British government. . . . The canal is of enormous value to our shipping interests. It has saved us millions upon millions of pounds by halving or nearly halving the route to India, and greatly

¹Quoted from the London papers of May 1, 1876, by Edward De Leon, in his "The Khédive's Egypt," p. 36.

reducing the distance by water between us and our entire Eastern dominions. It is admittedly of the utmost political advantage to us with reference to India. This vast profit, infinitely exceeding anything gained by the canal company, has been acquired without risk of any kind to the British government, and, indeed, has been forced upon us against our will by the enterprise of M. de Lesseps. When the company who bore the brunt of the outlay ask for an infinitesimal part of the profit conferred upon England, and ask it in the form of dues stipulated before the outlay was incurred, we are invited to beat them down by the threat of a rival canal. This would not be creditable in an individual. It would be wholly unworthy of a great nation.¹

And so the great nation decided.

But to return to Said Pasha. Having described his relations to the Suez canal, it only remains to record that he died in 1863. But, in passing, it must be noticed that a financial cloud, that was destined to blacken the Egyptian sky, and to let loose its bolts of distress and bankruptcy on the land of the Nile, was already discernible on the horizon. Said had exhausted the surplus accumulated by Abbas, and had left a debt of more than three millions sterling. How this was doubled, quadrupled, and doubled again under his successor, the sequel will show.

Ismail's Ambitious Designs.

Ismail, the son of Ibrahim, the son of Mehemet Ali, succeeded Said. It is said that Abbas, long before, had been very jealous of him. He must, at least, have disliked him heartily; for the two men had nothing in common, and everything that the one shunned the other courted. While Abbas was ruling Egypt with a rigorous economy, Ismail sought the more congenial atmosphere of Paris. He obtained, in one capital and another, an intimate acquaintance with the civilization of the West, and stored his mind with all those pictures of European development that, though the result of centuries in Europe, he thought might be reproduced in Egypt within his lifetime. Having secured thus "a European education," Ismail returned

¹ *The Contemporary Review*, August, 1883.

to Egypt, after the accession of Said, and received from him a governmental portfolio. He seems to have had the entire confidence of the viceroy, for twice he acted as regent. He commanded, also, the year before Said's death, an expedition to the Sûdan. On his accession in 1863, therefore, Ismail was a man of experience—such experience as should have given him exceptional qualification for a ruler. But greater than all the wisdom, was the ambition that his observation had begotten.

It seemed as if Ismail's dreams of wealth and power were to be realized immediately upon his accession. Our Civil War was to furnish the means to this end. Europe had depended upon our Southern states for her cotton, and when, by the war, the supply was cut off, there followed throughout Europe what has been called "a cotton famine." Especially in England the want threatened to become a great distress. The factories were closing, and legislators and economists were puzzled to find a way out of the danger. The shrewd Ismail, at this juncture, was not slow to perceive that the seed introduced into Egypt by his grandfather might bring him the coveted wealth, and he bent his entire energies to the production of cotton, borrowing money to buy the implements and tools, to secure the proper irrigation, and planning for work on a grander scale than the fellah at his shadûf had ever dreamed of. Ismail's success was greater than he could have expected in his most visionary moments. The soil of the Nile valley seemed admirably suited to the new industry, and every yield was enormous. The fellahîn, the most conservative people under the sun, forsook their lentils, their millet, and their wheat, and hastened, in their humble way, to acquire wealth after the manner of their lord and ruler. And they prospered as their race never has been known to prosper from the time when their remote ancestors were the pyramid-builders of the Pharaohs, down to the present day. It was the Golden Age of modern Egypt. In three years the exports rose from four and a half millions to more than thirteen millions sterling. As is usually the case with those who enjoy unaccustomed and unexpected affluence, neither the viceroy, nor the great pashas, nor the lowly fellahîn, made wise use of their

prosperity. Their extravagances increased with their wealth. The viceroy thought that the influx of gold would be permanent, and he spent and wasted accordingly; the pashas believed that the vast estates that favoritism had bestowed upon them would continue to produce in luxuriance the white flower that was so easily convertible into yellow gold, and they lived their voluptuous life of Parisian and Oriental excess in their daira palaces; and the fellahîn thought not and cared not, so long as their burdens were light and they could enjoy the sensual life that the Prophet Mohammed allowed them.

They all counted in vain. Our Civil War had come to an end, and the Southern states were again supplying the markets of Europe; the naturally fertile valley of the Nile, denied the necessary rotation of crops or the chemical fertilizers that the agricultural science of to-day substitutes, had been ruinously exhausted; and as a consequence the Golden Age was ended. All the extravagances reacted upon the fellahîn. The viceroy could not or would not contract his expenses, and, of necessity, he turned to the money-lenders and the taskmasters. The latter ground down the fellahîn to a life that was nothing more than existence. Exorbitant taxes were forced from them with the aid of the kûrbash, and their condition was more miserable than before their recent prosperity. At this time the cattle murrain made its appearance in the Nile valley, and the loss was overwhelming, and, of itself, sufficient to impoverish the people for a time. The Egyptian government, slow usually to give such assistance, was obliged to expend £5,000,000 to aid the suffering fellahîn. But, to offset the gift and in lieu of unpaid taxes, the land of the unfortunates was appropriated, not by the government, but by the viceroy himself. In the years that followed he became master, in this fraudulent manner, of one-fifth of the cultivable land of Egypt.

As the condition of the fellahîn grew worse, the extravagances of Ismail seemed to increase. In 1866, at a time when he should have economized to the last degree, not only to relieve his country but to pay his own debts, which were already of a threatening size, Ismail, yielding, as ever, to his inordinate

ambition, purchased the title and rank of *khédiv-el-misr* (king of Egypt) from the sultan. The firman that granted these honors and raised the limit of the Egyptian army from eighteen thousand to thirty thousand men, cost Egypt the increase from three hundred and seventy-six thousand to six hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds of yearly tribute to the Porte. From this time on the Khédive Ismail, through the most prodigal use of money-bribes and presents, secured a succession of firmans from the Porte. A firman of 1867 empowered him "to make laws for the internal government of Egypt, and to conclude conventions with foreign powers as to customs, duties, and the police, postal and transit services. A firman of 1872 conceded to the khédive the power of contracting loans without the sultan's authorization"¹—a power how used and abused!—and established the law of primogeniture in his family.² A firman of 1873, "which Ismail obtained by bribery at Constantinople on a more than ordinary scale, removed all limit from the numbers of his army, and empowered him to conclude conventions with foreign states concerning all internal and other affairs of Egypt in which foreigners might be con-

¹ John Westlake, Q.C., LL.D., England's Duty in Egypt, *The Contemporary Review*, December, 1882.

² This part of the firman, as it reads, "establishes the line of succession by order of primogeniture in Ismail's family—his eldest living brother, or this brother's eldest son, succeeding in case of failure of direct male issue, to the exclusion always of the female line. In the case of the heir being a minor (*i.e.*, under eighteen) on the khédive's death, he is at once to assume the vice-regal title under a council of regency. If, in his will, the late khédive have not nominated this council, the ministers of the interior, of war, of foreign affairs, of justice, the commander-in-chief of the army, the inspector-general of the provinces, in power at his death, will form the council of regency, and will elect a regent from their body. Should the votes be equally divided in favor of two names, the regency falls to the minister holding the more important department, who will govern with the council of his colleagues, when their powers have been confirmed at Constantinople by an imperial firman. The regent and the council of regency are immovable before the legal expiration of their powers, *i.e.*, before the majority of the khédive. Should one of the council die, the survivors have power to elect a successor. Should the regent die, the council will elect another from their body and a successor to the place he will leave vacant in the council." (Egypt under Ismail Pasha, edited by Blanchard Jerrold, pp. 71, 72.) This law reads well, and remains unchanged to-day. It did not provide, however, for such a forced abdication as occurred in 1879.

cerned.”¹ So much for Ismail’s expensive relations with his suzerain. They had brought him, it is true, a power such as Mehemet Ali had dreamed of after the fall of Acre, but they had helped drag him deeper into the meshes of a financial snare, from which he was destined to escape only with the loss of all the powers he had inherited or so dearly purchased.

Ismail’s extravagances at home were equally enormous. When cotton was no longer recognized as king in the Nile valley, the khédive quickly proposed to substitute the culture of sugar. Not only did he proceed to cultivate the cane, but he planned to manufacture the sugar. For this purpose he built nineteen factories and refineries, and imported the best of machinery from Europe. This attempt to convert agricultural Egypt into a manufacturing country must always be regarded as the crowning farce of Ismail’s reign. The country may be said to be absolutely without fuel ; for there are no coal mines, and the tax-paying trees are too few and far too valuable to serve as fire-wood. With all his advanced ideas, the khédive seems not to have learned the first principles of political economy. Besides the building of the factories, a railroad was required to make them accessible. This was constructed from Cairo to Assiût at vast expense. Canals, also, were needed for the proper irrigation ; and they, of course, involved another great outlay. But there was never any hesitancy on account of expense ; and, the money being borrowed, the works were pushed ahead.

It would not be right, however, to attribute all the debts of Egypt, incurred during Ismail’s reign, to his inordinate extravagance. The cattle murrain, for example, cost the government and people dear, as has been seen, but not through any fault of Ismail. In another matter the khédive laid a heavy burden on the government, but at the same time he won, and deservedly, the gratitude of his people and the applause of civilized nations. Said Pasha had promised to furnish the Suez canal company with a large amount of labor each year for the construction of the canal, and this labor was to be provided by the *corvée*,

¹ Westlake, England’s Duty in Egypt, *The Contemporary Review*, December, 1882.

a system of forced service, in use as far back certainly as the age of the pyramid-builders. But it was disastrous to the agriculture of the country to have twenty thousand of the fellahin torn from their homes each month and forced to work on the canal. Ismail recognized this fact and abolished the *corvée*. It is generally admitted that he was influenced by humanitarian motives. And well he might have been! Our own most dreadful tales of slavery could be paralleled with the sufferings and tortures of those miserable mortals who were wrested from what little they had to make them happy in the fertile valley to endure the privations and almost certain death of that desert highway. Whatever the motive here, Ismail must always be credited with having performed a noble action. The canal company, deprived of the promised assistance, naturally demurred. This and a few other disputed questions were finally referred to the Emperor Napoleon for arbitration, and he awarded the company the somewhat exorbitant indemnity of £3,360,000. This was in 1864. In 1866 Egypt re-purchased for the sum of £400,000 a domain that had been sold to the canal company five years before for £74,000. It was a modest advance! Of course such extraordinary expenses as these necessitated new loans. All the loans that Ismail raised are themselves so extraordinary that their details must be noticed as well as the methods that the khédive employed in his endeavors to bear the burden of his obligations.

Before proceeding to the loans it will be well to form an idea of the revenue of Egypt under Ismail. To do this it will be necessary to consider the taxes somewhat in detail, although it is impossible, as Mr. Cave and Messrs. Goschen and Joubert found, to get perfectly accurate and trustworthy statistics on the subject, owing to the unsystematic and dishonest methods of a treasury system that was nothing more nor less than a hierarchy of swindlers, in which each officer got as much from the one below him and gave as little to the one above as was possible. What the amount of the taxes was before Ismail's time, one can only guess; but we may be sure that they never varied much from the utmost that kûrbash and

extortion could raise.¹ The land tax, immediately after his accession, was increased by twenty-five per cent. This tax was again and again increased, until, in 1871, the famous *mûkabala*² was invented. This was a voluntary additional tax of fifty per cent for six years, which, being paid, would free the land of the one assuming the self-imposed obligation from half the grain tax in perpetuity. The *mûkabala* was found to yield so readily to the demands of the moment—and Ismail lived in the present, borrowing no trouble from the thought of obligations to be met in the future—that it was *enforced* in 1876, and the period, at the end of which exemption should take place, was increased to twelve years. No tax ever met with such bitter denunciation as the *mûkabala* did from its inception to the day of its abolition. It was bad for the payer and bad for the payee. “A ruinous financial device,” says Blanchard Jerrold, “seeing that for a sum of in all less than twenty-seven million pounds, spread over a dozen years, is thence afterward surrendered for all time nearly two million five hundred thousand pounds of its [Egypt’s] surest and most easily collected revenue.”³

In order to form an idea of what the yearly revenue of Egypt was from 1870 to 1875, it is necessary to consult the reports that were made after that time; for up to 1875 there had been no attempt to estimate the revenue in detail. As the agricultural conditions did not vary much from year to year, the

¹ That the condition of the tax-payer has not changed much in three thousand years may be gathered from a papyrus in the British Museum, containing a part of the correspondence between Ameneman, the chief librarian of Rameses the Great, and the poet Pentaur. Ameneman writes: “Have you ever represented to yourself, in imagination, the estate of the rustic who tills the ground? Before he has put the sickle to his crop, the locusts have blasted part thereof; then come the rats and birds. If he is slack in housing his crops, the thieves are on him. The horse dies of weariness as it drags the wain. The tax-collector arrives; his agents are armed with clubs; he has negroes with him who carry whips of palm-branches. They all cry: ‘Give us your grain!’ and he has no way of avoiding their extortionate demands. Next, the wretch is caught, bound, and sent off to work, without wage, at the canals; his wife is taken and chained, his children are stripped and plundered.”—Quoted by Blanchard Jerrold, *Egypt Under Ismail Pasha*, p. 164.

² *Mûkabala* = compensation.

³ *Egypt Under Ismail Pasha*.

revenue during 1877, for example, would be approximately equal to the revenue during 1872 or 1873. This analogical reasoning is allowable, but not very satisfactory; for, unfortunately, even the *official* estimates of Europeans appointed for the purpose are found to vary greatly. The official estimate of Mr. Goschen, made in December, 1876, placed the year's revenue at £10,804,300. Mr. Cave's estimate for the same year was a little over ten and a half millions. Mr. Romaine gives the official revenue, month by month, for 1877, reaching a total of £9,350,274 for the year. The Cairene committee, in 1878, placed the total income of the khédive's government at about eleven and a half millions; but they considered this estimate low, and thought that, if it had been possible to count all revenues, the sum total would not have been less than thirteen millions sterling. This may readily be believed, if we may trust, approximately, the statement of Ismail Sadyk (the *mâffetish*, or "lord high treasurer" of the khédive, and one of the most notorious rascals that ever plundered a state and people), that he had raised by taxation in one year the sum of fifteen million pounds. But some estimates varied as widely in the other direction, and placed the revenue even as low as seven and a half millions. The extremes are far apart.

It will be interesting to separate one of the total estimates into its constituent parts; and for this purpose we may take the report of the Cairene committee. They placed

The land tax	at	£7,346,219
The date palm tax	"	211,046
The house, shop, and mill taxes	"	28,195
The poll tax ¹	"	630,204
Licenses and patents ²	"	798,253

MISCELLANEOUS TAXES.

1. Succession or transfer duties on legacies, mortgages, *etc.* £103,685
2. Stamp tax (no statistics).
3. Salt tax³ 400,000

¹ This tax was divided into three classes: *viz.*, 40, 30, and 15 piasters. The collectors, however, were instructed to produce an average of 30 piasters (\$1.50) a head.

² These were imposed on all servants, operatives, tradesmen, and merchants.

³ Nine piasters imposed on every man, woman, and child over seven years of age.

4. <i>Octroi</i> and road duties on produce, fodder, and building materials ¹	£328,872
5. Customs	639,000
6. Navigation dues	110,185
7. Duties on fisheries	33,548
8. Law taxes	44,392
9. Tobacco tax	106,777
10. Tax on cattle sales	45,402
11. Sheep slaughtered for food	14,769
12. Animal tax	8,479
13. Stamp tax on manufactured goods	18,000
14. Payments of railways into Public Debt Department	602,990
Total	£11,470,016 ²

From the foregoing notes and figures it will be seen that it is almost impossible to exaggerate the extortionate character of taxation in Egypt a decade ago. But it should be noticed in passing that the land of the natives only was taxed; by a monstrous injustice—an injustice that continues to the present day, though there is just now a prospect of its being remedied—the European property-holders have never paid so much as a brass farthing into the state treasury on the land they have held.

Whether, now, we place the yearly revenue at the lowest estimate, seven millions sterling, or at the highest, thirteen millions, or midway between the two, the fact always remains the same—that Ismail was unable to live within his income. With the same revenue Mehemet Ali would have made Egypt independent of Turkey, and himself the champion of all Islam. Even the gay Said would have been at a loss for ways to squander such undreamed-of means. But with Ismail it was different. As we have seen, he could not forget the splendors of European courts, nor cease to envy the civilization of western

¹ This figure the committee considered small, since irregular government expenses were taken out of the *octroi* receipts, as, for example, the salaries of a *corps de ballet*! When, later, Egypt came under European control, the comptroller general encountered much opposition by his refusal to pay such salaries from such a fund.

² Other taxes, as on fire engines, ferries, jewelry, burials, marriages, tolls on bridges, and exemption from military service, were not counted, owing to absence of trustworthy statistics.

countries; nor could he contract the extravagances he had learned in the days when "cotton was king" in Egypt. If he could not live and flourish and build and spend on the strength of his internal resources, he knew that there were bankers and money-lenders in Europe who would consider the yearly overflow of the Nile the best of security. The story of his transactions with these unbelievers forms the most important chapter in the modern history of Egypt; but the story is devoid of romance; it is as bold and bald and true as the working of a natural law. For the state, as for the individual, when debts are contracted to pay other debts, when further sums are borrowed to pay those, and when this system of discharging obligations is continued, the end is ruin. In the case of Egypt, the ever impending ruin has been long averted, owing as much (or more) to the political importance of the country as to its inherent wealth; but the burning question of that land to-day is the question of finance; for the debts that are due to the follies of Ismail still stand, an unmanageable burden. And this is how the first khédive brought about the financial disaster, and his own downfall.

The Road to Ruin.

It will be remembered that Said had left a debt of about three millions sterling. To be exact, he had effected in 1862 a seven per cent loan in the European market of £3,292,800.¹ Of course he did not receive this amount entire, for the commission rate of issue, *etc.*, reduced the sum paid into the Egyptian treasury to £2,500,000. But this loan did not prevent Said from leaving a further legacy of liabilities, which necessitated a second loan within a year after his death. The amount of this one, which was raised in England, was £5,704,200. It yielded to the treasury only £4,864,063. And still the indebtedness was not covered. Up to this time the financial troubles had come through no fault of Ismail's. But in 1866 he had begun to push the sugar industry; and, not having laid by

¹ For facts and figures I depend chiefly upon J. C. McCoan's "Egypt As It Is,"

any of the enormous revenues from cotton, he was forced, in order to carry out his railroad scheme, to contract a seven per cent loan of £3,000,000, which netted him £2,640,000. The cattle murrain, the abolition of the *corvée*, and his extravagances called for another loan only two years later. The nominal amount of this loan was £11,890,000; but heavier terms had to be made; for, though a seven per cent stock, it was issued at seventy-five, and yielded, after the usual deductions, only £7,193,334. In other words, the total annual cost of this loan was more than thirteen per cent. "The khédive, by this time," as Mr. McCoan remarks,¹ "was fairly on the road to ruin." But the national credit was still good, since the floating debt had been covered by this last loan.

Ismail seems not to have suspected the perils ahead. It was his aim to make a civilized country even out of uncivilized materials, and to develop trade even where natural resources were wanting, let the cost be what it might. It certainly was great; it was enormous. The outlay, even if the revenue of

and upon Mr. Cave's Report of 1876, from which the following concise table is taken:

LOAN OF	To be paid off in	Nominal amount of loan, but real debt of state.	Charge on nominal amount.			Amount realized.	Real charges on amount realized.		
			Int.	Sink'g fund.	Total.		Int.	Sink'g fund.	Total.
		£	pr c.	pr c.	pr c.	£	pr c.	pr c.	pr c.
1862	1892	3,292,800	7	1	8	(a)	...	...	...
1864	1879	5,704,200	7	3.87	10.87	4,864,063	8.2	4.5	12.7
1866	1874	3,000,000	7	...	...	2,640,000 (b)	8	18.9	26.9
1868	1898	11,890,000	7	1	8	7,193,334	11.56	1.68	13.24
1873	1903	32,000,000	7	1	8	20,740,077	10.8	1.56	12.36
Daira taken over by the state.		55,887,000				35,437,474			
1866	1881	3,000,000	9	3.27	12.27	3,000,000 (c)	...	...	12.27
1867	1881	2,080,000	9	3.4	12.4	2,080,000 (c)	...	...	17.04
Daira loan of Ismail.						5,080,000			
1870	1890	7,142,860	7	2.35	9.35	5,000,000	10	3.36	13.36

(a) No particulars of amount realized.

(b) Railway loan repaid by six annual payments of £500,000, equivalent to a sinking fund of 18.9 per cent.

(c) No particulars of amounts realized, but probably the whole.

¹ McCoan, Egypt As It Is, p. 142.

the country had permitted it, would have been foolish extravagance; but in view of Egypt's financial condition, it was nothing less than reckless robbery. The fellahin — the people of Egypt — were the sufferers. The kûrbash exacted more extortionate payments than ever; but all to no purpose. By 1873 the floating liabilities, paying nearly fourteen per cent interest, amounted to about £26,000,000. The Messrs. Oppenheim, who had secured the loan of 1868, now proposed to fund the entire mass of debts in a seven per cent loan of £32,000,000. This offer, disastrous in its results, was accepted. The Egyptian government received in cash only £11,740,077, the remainder of the amount realized, £9,000,000, being paid in bonds of the floating debt, which the contractors bought up at a heavy discount and gave over to the Egyptian government at 93. There was, to say the least, a good deal of Shylockism shown by the money-lenders of the West in their financial relations with Egypt. But if they were knavish, Ismail was not altogether simple. Looking at the figures that tell the story of "this wicked waste of a country's resources," as Mr. McCoan calls it, we see that from loans amounting to £58,887,000, the Egyptian government received only £35,437,474. At the end of 1875 the treasury had repaid £29,570,995 in interest and in sinking fund. Was so much money ever paid for so little gain?

There were other loans than those above mentioned. The *daira*, the immense personal estate of the khédive, afforded excellent security for supplementary loans. The first of these was negotiated in 1866, its amount being £3,387,000. The following year the khédive compelled his uncle Halim to sell to him his inherited estate; and to pay for the property obtained by this enforced sale, the so-called "Mustapha Pasha loan" of £2,080,000 was negotiated. Still another *daira* loan of more than seven millions sterling was raised in 1870 at seven per cent, the stock being issued at 75. Only £5,000,000 was handed over to the borrower. Thus the same story is told with the private as with the public loans.

The question now was: How long could the ruinous rate of interest be paid on these enormous debts? Up to 1875 it was

regularly paid, and the credit of Egypt was good. But the crisis was now near at hand. The stock of the great loan of 1873 was quoted at 53 in the London market, and the Cairene treasury was almost empty. Even Ismail Sadyk, the mûffetish, with all his tortures and threats, could not get piasters enough from the fellahîn to meet the demands that were measured by hundreds of thousands of pounds. And yet he was ordered to find money to pay the December dividend. At this juncture the khédive appealed to England to rescue Egypt from ruin; and produced, as his last card, the 176,000 Suez canal shares, held by his government. The mûffetish was offering the same securities in negotiations with the bankers of Paris and Alexandria, and with the *Crédit Foncier* of France, in his attempt to force upon them new treasury bonds for £16,000,000 at fifteen per cent interest. After a series of advances and retreats on the part of the English and the French governments, Disraeli's government finally telegraphed to the khédive, in December, 1875, that England would give four millions sterling for the shares in drafts on Rothschild. The offer was eagerly accepted, and the crisis was tided over. The shares of the '73 loan in London rose twenty points at a jump, but after a few days they were quoted at 61, midway between the points of utmost depression and inflation. A more vital interest in the affairs of Egypt was now given to England than she had before possessed. She had gone thither, in the first place, to further the demands of her commerce; she had then manœuvred for the protection of the interests of the British bondholders; and now, in addition to these undertakings, she was to guard the rights that this purchase gave her, and increase the obligations that it heaped upon Egypt.

Four million pounds, as Ismail soon found, could not stem the tide of disaster for long. Everything worth it had been mortgaged, and the mûffetish was offering treasury bonds to the extent of two hundred thousand and three hundred thousand and even four hundred thousand pounds in return for cash advances of one hundred thousand at twenty per cent. A few were taken, and by heavy sales of *daira* sugar and corn the

demands were satisfied for a time. The khédive now invited England to investigate the financial condition of his country, and Mr. Stephen Cave, M.P., was sent out for this purpose. Nubar Pasha, the foremost of Egyptian statesmen, was called to the cabinet, and at the beginning of 1876 everything had a reassuring aspect. But within three months Nubar had resigned, and Disraeli, to the consternation of bondholders, had announced in Parliament that the khédive requested that Mr. Cave's report be not published for fear of its effect upon Egyptian finances. But this request was disregarded. The effect of the report, however, was more favorable to the khédive than he expected, owing to the somewhat rose-colored view Mr. Cave took of the financial outlook.

Egypt [he wrote] may be said to be in a transition state, and she suffers from the defects of the system out of which she is passing as well as from those of the system into which she is attempting to enter. She suffers from the ignorance, dishonesty, waste, and extravagance of the East, such as have brought her suzerain to the verge of ruin, and at the same time from the vast expense caused by hasty and inconsiderate endeavor to adopt the civilization of the West.

He read the causes of Egyptian difficulty aright. But he was wrong in estimating that the yearly revenue from 1876 to 1885 would be more than double the cost of the administration. To meet the necessities of the government, he proposed another unification of all debts, exclusive of three of the earliest and smallest loans which were to be paid off by the operation of the *mûkabala*. The consolidated debt, amounting to £75,000,000, was to bear interest at seven per cent, and to be redeemable in 1926. The project, however, was not carried out.

The Khédive Ismail, in the meantime, had succeeded in getting the greater part of his floating debt taken up in France. That the holders had been duped was evident before the end of March (1876), for there was no money in the Egyptian treasury to meet the April dividends, and the khédive was appealing for aid to the English and French governments. His overtures were flatly refused by England; but when France realized that the *Crédit Foncier*, the second financial institution of the land,

was in a strait in consequence of its relations with Egypt, a cabinet council was summoned in Paris, and on March 31 the April dividend was dispatched to London. And again the impending disaster was averted.

Mr. Cave's scheme for the unification of the debt fell through, as above noticed, although coupled with certain measures of reform, which provided for a regular control of the revenue under the administration of Europeans and natives, and for the establishment of debt and audit officers. The cause of failure was that nominations were left in the hands of the khédive, who was himself controlled by the corrupt mûffetish, Ismail Sadyk. France now proposed a financial scheme; but this also failed of adoption. In November, 1876, however, the English and French bondholders united in sending to Egypt a joint commission, consisting of Mr. Goschen, M.P., and M. Joubert, to solve the financial problem. Their labor resulted in the khédive's issuing a decree, November 18, 1876, that remodelled the debt on the following basis :¹

TITLE.	AMOUNT.	INTEREST, ETC.	SECURITY.
Unified,	£59,000,000	£4,130,000	General revenues.
Preference,	17,000,000	886,000	Railways, <i>etc.</i>
Daira,	8,825,000	450,000	Khédive's estates.
	<u>£84,825,000</u>	<u>£5,466,000</u>	

The reforms of November 18 secured a substantial power to European comptrollers, and the downfall of Ismail Sadyk, who now disappeared from the face of the earth in the mysterious way common to the Orient. He left an immense property, which included three hundred women in his harem, two hundred and fifty men-servants, £600,000 in money, and 30,000 feddans² of land. The mûkabala, which would have been abolished if the unification proposed in May had been accepted, was retained by the Messrs. Goschen and Joubert in a slightly modified form.

Those who fancied that plain sailing was now in store for the khédive and the bondholders were again doomed to disappoint-

¹ M. G. Mulhall, *Egyptian Finance*, *The Contemporary Review*, October, 1882.

² A feddan is about equal to an acre.

ment. Within a few months it was apparent that the financial state of affairs was as bad as ever. The ordinary expenses were augmented by a special tax of two shillings an acre to assist Turkey in the war against Russia. Egypt, backed by England and France, whose interest it was to have all revenues applied to the public debt, for a time resisted the pecuniary demands of the Porte, though she told the Turkish envoys that she would forward troops to the seat of war if the Porte would bear the expenses of transport and maintenance. The new Egyptian parliament, however, at last voted the special war tax, and ten thousand troops were sent at the expense of Egypt.

During 1877 the interest on the loans was raised by collecting the taxes with all the old-time cruelty (Mr. Mulhall says "the fellahîn were bastinadoed even more than before"; but that was not possible) and as much as nine months in advance. This ruinous system, of course, brought greater difficulties with each pay-day; and at the beginning of 1878 the outlook, to say the least, was most doleful. It was at this time that the exiled Prince Halim, the uncle of Ismail and the most enlightened, perhaps, of the descent of Mehemet Ali, wrote a letter of advice to Ismail from Constantinople. The letter, which bears the date of March 4, 1878, is worth quoting, at least in part. He wrote :

1. Place the financial administration of the country in the hands of Europeans chosen by the interested powers; such administration alone having the power to appoint and dismiss all officials connected with the finance of the country.

2. The financial administration thus constituted, and all its dealings being carried on in broad daylight, you must appoint a special inquiry commission, chosen by the high officials, to establish an equitable repartition of taxes, which are now arbitrarily distributed and levied.

3. All property belonging to the princes and princesses shall be made over to the state, so as to be used in payment of all debts.

4. The revenue of all the dairas, the khédive's and his family's, being thus devoted to the paying off of public and private debts, the civil list, the amount of which shall be agreed upon by the interested powers, will support the khédive and his family.

5. The reform tribunals, having over them a sovereign free from all personal interests, and by whose care all the judgments which they pro-

nounce shall be carried out, will be empowered, over and above their present jurisdiction, to try causes between natives, if the latter shall so choose it.

These five articles, says Mr. Jerrold,¹ “became the basis on which the discussion of Egyptian affairs turned.” The first article of reform had already met with Ismail’s apparent approval, the state revenues having been placed in the hands of two “comptrollers-general,” one English, and the other French. They were appointed for five years, with almost unlimited powers in the domain of finance. But the step was taken reluctantly; for the khédive realized that, to quote the words of Mr. Justin McCarthy,² “when a country has once accepted an investigation of its finances by foreign powers, and given the practical control of its treasury into the hands of foreign representatives, its claim to independence can hardly fail to be regarded as signally diminished.” Still more reluctantly, we may well believe, did the khédive yield to the demand of the commission to hand over his vast private estates to meet the *daira* coupons. But he had been forced into both of these actions by the troubles of 1877. Early in 1878 the khédive made a bold effort to secure foreign favor, and quiet the discontent among the money-lenders of Alexandria. The Egyptian government had announced, in 1877, that it could not pay the existing high rate of interest on the public debt; but before the bondholders would consent to any reduction, they demanded the appointment of a commission to examine into the receipts and expenses of the government. The khédive, in January, 1878, allowed an investigation of receipts; but would permit no examination of expenditures. Two months later, however, he issued the following decree:

We, Khédive of Egypt—with respect to our decree of the 27th of January, 1878, instituting a superior Commission of Inquiry, considering that it is the duty of that Commission to prepare and submit for our sanction regulations to secure the regular working of the public services,

¹ Egypt Under Ismail Pasha, p. 256.

² England Under Gladstone, ch. xiii.

and to give a just satisfaction to the interests of the country, and to the public creditors — have decreed and do decree :

ARTICLE 1. The widest powers are given to the Commission we establish.

ART. 2. The investigation of the Commission of Inquiry will embrace all the elements of the financial situation, always respecting the legitimate rights of the Government.

ART. 3. The ministers and officials of our Government will be bound to furnish directly to the Commission, at its request and without delay, all information required from them.

ART. 4. There are named as members of the superior Commission of Inquiry : President, M. Ferdinand de Lesseps ; Vice-President, Mr. Rivers Wilson ; Vice-President, his Excellency, Riaz Pasha ; M. Baravelli ; Mr. Baring ; M. de Blignières ; M. de Kremer.

ART. 5. A credit necessary for the expenses of the Commission will be opened on the budget of 1878, in accordance with the report which the President will present us.

ISMAIL.

CAIRO, March 30, 1878.

On August 20, Mr. Rivers Wilson presented the report of the commission of inquiry. The report considered first the system of accounts employed by the Egyptian government. It then explained the system of taxation, and discussed the *corvée*, the military conscription, and the water laws. The second part of the report was taken up with the estimate of the non-consolidated liabilities. The amount of floating debt to be settled was found to be £6,276,000. The gross expenditure for 1878 was estimated at £10,405,665, and the gross receipts at £7,819,000. Adding the difference between receipts and expenditures, £2,586,665, to the amount of floating debt, the total deficit for 1878 would appear to be £8,862,665 ; but this sum was reduced to a little more than six millions sterling by deductions for security against partially guaranteed debts, and for amounts nominally due to the dairas, but before that time surrendered. There was immediate need, therefore, for about six millions. The report closed with the following suggestions of reform :

That no taxes shall be imposed or gathered without a law, authorizing them, being promulgated ; that future legislation may extend the taxation to foreigners ; that there shall be an efficient control over tax-collectors ; that there shall be a reserve fund to provide against the

contingency of a bad rising of the Nile ; that there shall be a special jurisdiction for complaints on the subject of the collection and assessment of taxes for the special protection of the natives ; that existing vexatious taxes shall be abolished except for works of public utility ; that the obligation to military service shall be placed under restrictions ; and that all the immovable property of the different dairas shall be independently managed by a special administration for the benefit of the creditors both of the state and the dairas.

These were excellent recommendations, though there was something very naïve in the suggestion that “there shall be a *reserve fund* to provide against the contingency of a bad rising of the Nile.” It would have been as easy to resolve that, if the river failed to rise, copious rains should fall ; for reserve funds are as rare in Egypt as rain-storms in the desert. Not the least good of the recommendations was that providing that foreigners should be taxed ; a measure that the Westerners have always been shamefully slow to encourage. The reforms contained also a plan for the cadastral survey of Egypt, which was recognized in England, in France, and in Egypt, as just to the fellahîn and as the treasury’s only safeguard against fraud and corruption. The khédive accepted the report on August 23 in a speech expressing entire approval of the work of the commission, appreciation of their services, and determination to carry out the reforms. To show how thoroughly in earnest he was, so he said, he had recalled Nubar Pasha from exile and would entrust him with the formation of a new ministry. The new ministry was composed of the following persons : Nubar Pasha, president of the council, minister of foreign affairs and of justice ; Riaz Pasha, minister of interior ; Ratif Pasha, minister of war ; Ali Mubarek Pasha, minister of public instruction, agriculture and public works. The portfolio of finance was left vacant, but it was soon offered to Mr. Rivers Wilson, who accepted the office with the consent of the British government. This excited the jealousy of France, to appease which the comparatively unimportant office of public works was offered to M. de Blignières. Italy then put in the claim that she should be consulted in Egyptian affairs ; but her voice was ignored.

Before any active steps had been taken toward inaugurating the proposed reforms, Mr. Wilson urged the necessity of another loan to meet immediate demands, and this, although the total debt already amounted to ninety-two millions sterling. But he had no choice in the matter; the loan was imperative. The only unmortgaged property on which a loan could be raised consisted of the *daira* estates belonging to the khédive's family. These, now, with a rent-roll of £430,000 a year, were handed over to the state, in consequence, not of the advice of Prince Halim, but of the utter necessity of the time. The loan was concluded with the Messrs. Rothschild of Paris, in November, 1878, at the rate of 73. The nominal amount of the loan was £8,500,000, but with the discount of twenty-seven per cent and the commission of two and a half per cent, the net product was only £5,992,000. Thinking that financial affairs could rest for the moment, Mr. Wilson now made a tour of inspection through lower Egypt. The people met him with petitions, which he received with promises of redress. He believed, and they had every reason to believe, the words he uttered in a speech at Tanta.

A new era [he said] has begun for Egypt. Reforms are already initiated, and if you will only have patience, you can count on their completion. If you have grievances, make them known to us, and you shall be righted. We wish to establish equality and legality in the country, and the law shall no longer be for the rich alone; it shall work for rich and poor alike.

The fellahîn might well have been happy; they had never in their ages of oppression received such assurances before.

But tranquillity was not yet. A number of creditors at Alexandria had put an end to the financial negotiations in a most unexpected manner. These creditors had been watching their opportunity. They had tried some months before to seize the furniture of the palace at Ramleh, but had been foiled by the bailiffs. They had succeeded, however, in obtaining a lien on the very estates that were offered as security for the new loan. It was not surprising, therefore, that Baron Rothschild withheld the amount of the loan. To add to the khédive's

troubles, the unpaid officers of the army in Cairo were urging their claims. The delay of Baron Rothschild precipitated matters; and on February 18, 1879, a military uprising occurred in Cairo, which nearly cost Mr. Rivers Wilson and Nubar Pasha their lives. While driving from a council of ministers their carriage was beset by a throng of officers, estimated at from four to twelve hundred; their driver was wounded, and they were insulted and forced back into the court-yard of the palace. The khédive attempted to pacify the mob, but they were only dispersed by the force of arms. Nubar Pasha, the next day, offered his resignation. It was at once accepted by the khédive, and again the foremost statesman of Egypt, and the only one worthy the name, according to the Western conception of the term, went into exile. It was immediately claimed in England and France that Ismail had sought to bring about this result by instigating or conniving at the insurrection among the officers. It was generally known that Ismail had a pet aversion to Nubar. They were as different as an honest man and a cunning diplomat could well be, and it is certain that the khédive would not have entrusted Nubar with the new ministry if the influence of England and France had not seemed to demand it. Confidence having been secured, Ismail was ready, and probably only too glad, to break with his prime minister. Nubar appreciated the desperate state of affairs that prevailed in Egypt. He had written to a friend on January 20:

The everlasting political comedy, or tragedy, is being played on the little stage here, just as it is everywhere else: a lost power sought to be regained, persons interested in not letting it be regained, who yet aid it for personal motives, or to give themselves importance — and not a sou in the Treasury withal. What a situation for the country, for the interested countries, and for your friend! ¹

England and France were naturally displeased with the dismissal — for such it was — of Nubar Pasha; and while the commander-in-chief of the Egyptian army was apologizing to Mr. Rivers Wilson for the insult he had received at the hands of the officers, the two powers were preparing a protest to submit to

¹ Quoted from Appleton's *Annual Cyclopædia*, 1879.

the khédive. Notwithstanding their demand, Nubar was not reinstated; but some of the conditions they imposed upon the khédive were followed in his attitude toward the new cabinet. Ismail's eldest son, Prince Tewfik, had been appointed president of the council, Zulfikar Pasha, minister of foreign affairs, and Mr. Wilson and M. de Blignières had retained their former offices. The important condition that was imposed upon Ismail, was embraced by him in a letter to Tewfik, in which he said: "As the native ministers now form a majority in the cabinet, it is right, in order to restore the balance of power and lend to the intervention of our European ministers all the usefulness possible, that they should be entitled to a veto on all measures they agree in disapproving." This sop thrown to the great powers, was soon counteracted. Egyptian and European influence clashed on the financial question, and Egypt came out first best. It was in this wise: Mr. Wilson, M. de Blignières, Mr. Baring, and the debt commissioners, submitted a plan for the equitable reduction of the claims of all creditors. The khédive opposed this with another plan, giving the bondholders better terms; and he was supported by the native parliament, the pashas, the ulemas, and all the high dignitaries of the land. The counter projects were pushed so hard that, on April 7, Prince Tewfik resigned the presidency of the council, and the khédive dismissed Mr. Wilson and M. de Blignières.

If, now, there was ever a ship of state that sailed between Scylla and Charybdis, it was the unsteady craft that Ismail was trying to guide. If he avoided the rocks on one side, it was only to meet destruction on the other. The wrath of the Egyptians had been averted by the dismissal of the foreigners, and by the same act the wrath of the great powers had been incurred. The French government was in high dudgeon at the offence, and threatened to reinstate her representative by force of arms, and asked England to join her. But England would not agree to any such decisive step. Even had she cared to, she would have found it difficult to spare more troops than were needed at that time to oppose the Boers in South Africa. She preferred, therefore, while waiting for the blood

of France to cool, to send dispatches to the khédive, demanding a reconsideration of his hasty and unwarranted action. But the khédive was now running things with a high hand. If England would not allow France to send an armed force to Egypt, and did not do so herself, he could laugh at the demands and threats of dispatches. His people said that the unbelievers had brought all the trouble and the ruin upon the fair valley of the Nile, and he decided to cut loose from the Western influence and defy its power. He virtually repudiated the debts and responsibilities of his country in a way that would put our own Virginia to shame, by issuing a decree, April 22, in which he declared that, for the future, he would himself control the finances and regulate the discharge of liabilities. He seemed to be riding on the wave of triumph. The people thought that the day of Mehemet Ali was come again.

But at this moment an unexpected voice of authority was heard. England and France were passing the time in an unavailing effort like that of two horses who cannot pull their load because the one holds back while the other starts, when, suddenly, the German chancellor made a protest that cost Ismail his throne. The German consul at Cairo, on the 17th of May, simply informed the khédive that the interests of German subjects must be protected, let come what might, and that any arbitrary change of system at that time would be considered prejudicial to their interests. What led the astute Bismarck to take the lead at this juncture is, and will probably remain, an enigma.¹ Doubtless he wished France still to be occupied

¹ Of this action and its consequences, Mr. Edward Dicey, writing in *The Nineteenth Century* of February, 1880, says: "How this action came about has never, so far as I know, been clearly ascertained. Germany had a comparatively insignificant interest in the affairs of Egypt. A very small portion of the floating debt was due to German creditors. It is not easy to believe that Germany ever really contemplated any intervention in Egypt, and it is still less easy to understand how she could practically have intervened even if she had been so minded. But the prestige of Germany—her repute of strength, which is to a nation what credit is to an individual—stood her in good stead. The mere fact that Prince Bismarck had declared the khédive could not be allowed to play fast and loose with the interests of German subjects produced more effect than all the dispatches indited from London and Paris; and from the day when Germany pronounced against the khédive it was obvious that

with foreign affairs, so that her internal development might not be commensurate with Germany's; for at that day, more than now, there seemed a plausible possibility that the grievances and hatred that did not die with Napoleon Third, might seek again a settlement by the sword. Certain it is that the very reasons that have led England to oppose French aggrandizement abroad, have led Germany to favor the same, or, at least, to view with satisfaction the foreign complications that require the exportation of troops and treasure. Against France England has had to protect only her interests abroad, and Germany her interests at home. This may or may not account for the chancellor's unexpected though timely interference; but the fact remains the same that his voice settled the khédive's fate. England, France, Austria, Russia, and Italy followed the lead of Germany, and protested against any interference with the commission of control and the non-execution of the tribunal judgments. At this juncture the proposal to depose the khédive, which the Porte had made to England and France in April, was renewed. This time it was accepted. In place, however, of the sultan's nominee for the succession — Prince Halim, the uncle of Ismail — England and France insisted upon raising Prince Tewfik, the son of Ismail, to the throne. The diplomatic correspondence in discussion of this difference, consumed a week or more in June; but on the 26th of that month the sultan at last yielded and signed the firman deposing Ismail in favor of Prince Mehemet Tewfik. Four days afterward the ex-khédive left the shores and troubles of Egypt behind him for an Italian life of luxury. If he had been a pasha in the feudal days of

the end had come. Meanwhile, the initiative taken by Germany had a result which might easily have been foreseen, and which doubtless was foreseen by those, whoever they may have been, who suggested to Prince Bismarck the advisability of his coming forward as the champion of the Egyptian creditors. It was felt at once in Paris that the time for vacillation had passed. The Republic could not allow it to be said that France was unable or unwilling to protect the interests of her subjects in Egypt, while the insignificant interests of the German creditors were safeguarded by the mere expression of Prince Bismarck's will; and the English government recognized, on the one hand, that France could not be held back any longer, and, on the other, that we could not allow Germany to take into her own hands the forcible solution of the Egyptian question."

Egypt, he would have forfeited his treasure and his life. As it was, he escaped with the latter, and was given an annual allowance of £50,000.

The character of Ismail Pasha has been variously depicted. He has been painted with all the virtues, on the one hand, and all the vices, on the other, that a monarch can be heir to. Of course neither extreme gives the true picture; and yet there is so much ground for each conception, that one inclines, at first thought, to declare that Ismail was both the blessing and the curse of his country. We think of the development of Egypt during the sixteen years of his reign, of the public works, schools, railways, telegraphs, founded and fostered, and we bless his name; but then we think of the cost, and the curse follows. We cannot agree with those who would shield Ismail by regarding him as the dupe of his wicked mûffetish. He may have been deceived and cheated by the latter, but he could not have been altogether ignorant of the financial schemes of his treasurer. They worked in the same groove and to the same end. They were both ambitious, but were not equally extravagant; for the mûffetish grew rich correspondingly as the khédive grew poor, although the money poured into the hands of the two alike. The mûffetish hoarded while the khédive wasted; but the desire of the miser was no greater than that of the spendthrift, and he must not bear the blame for both. For the financial woes of Egypt under Ismail, some blame, undoubtedly, attaches to the European money-lenders, whose bargains were so disastrous to the khédive. Their rates were often merciless. To prove that all the blame is theirs, Mr. Keay tells *A Tale of Shame*,¹ from the British blue books, in which he supports his arguments with many italics, small capitals and exclamation points. But they are not conclusive. They do not obliterate the fact of Ismail's extravagance.

If we could wholly lose sight of the different acts of the financial tragedy, the glory of Ismail's reign would still be marred by the means and measures he employed in carrying

¹ J. Seymour Keay, *Spoiling the Egyptians: A Tale of Shame*. Told from the Blue Books.

out his designs of development. No obstacle could turn him from his plan, and the teachings of economic science were ignored or misunderstood. We have seen how he bent his energies upon the senseless attempt to refine sugar, when his country furnished no fuel to run his dearly bought machines. Western civilization was Ismail's model in all things. It was his ambition, from the start, to implant in Egypt European arts and ideas. He thought he could declare into existence what had been the slow development of centuries in more enlightened lands. Even when he must have known that his country was on the verge of ruin, he boasted that Egypt was no longer a part of Africa, but of Europe.¹ Nothing could be more ridiculous than the story of Ismail's attempt to give his people governmental representation. He did not propose to establish even a paper constitution; and he had no idea of giving up any of his prerogatives, when, in 1866, he summoned the first Egyptian parliament that had assembled since the day of Mehemet Ali.² The members of the new parliament had not the faintest idea of their duties and powers. When the first bill was submitted to them by the khédive, and they were asked to signify their approval or disapproval, there was not a dissenting vote against the measure. For, they said, his Highness is the representative of Allah; and his will, like that of Allah and the Prophet, is our law. But this political simplicity vanished before the end of Ismail's reign, though the voice of the parliament was still recognized as the khédive's voice.

It is only fair to Ismail that a somewhat detailed statement

¹ In an interview with Mr. Rivers Wilson, August 23, 1877, Ismail said: "My country is no longer African; we now form part of Europe." From *Annual Cyclopædia* for 1877.

² Mr. McCoan, in "Egypt As It Is," page 117, thus describes the functions of the assembly: "In 1866, the Khédive revived the defunct Assembly of Delegates, one of the inchoate reforms projected by Mehemet Ali, but which had not met since his death. This germ of an Egyptian Parliament consists of village sheikhs and other provincial notables, elected by the communes, and assembles once a year to receive from the Privy Council a report on the administration during the twelvemonth. Its function is also to consider and advise on all proposed fiscal changes, new public works, and other matters of national concern that may be laid before it. It has, of course, no legislative power; but in practice its recommendations are received not merely with respect, but are often acted on by the Government."

should be made of the amounts expended by him in public works; for, having seen how one loan after another was received, the question naturally arises: Where did the money go? There was a considerable sum that the greed of money-lenders did not absorb in commissions and interest, and a large part of this went into public works. Mr. Mulhall gives the following table of works established between 1863 and 1879, in his article on "Egyptian Finance":¹

WORK.	AMOUNT.	OBSERVATION.
Suez canal . . .	£ 6,770,000	After deducting value of shares sold.
Nile canals . . .	12,600,000	Made 8,400 miles at £1,500 per mile.
Bridges	2,150,000	Built 430 at £5,000 per bridge.
Sugar-mills . . .	6,100,000	Built 64, with machinery, <i>etc.</i>
Harbor Alexandria	2,542,000	Greenfield and Elliott contract.
Suez docks . . .	1,400,000	Dussaud Bros.
Alex. water-works	300,000	Price agreed by Paris Syndicate.
Railways	13,361,000	Length 910 miles, new.
Telegraphs . . .	853,000	Length 5,200 miles, new.
Lighthouses . . .	188,000	Built 15 on Red Sea and Mediterranean.
	<hr/> £46,264,000	

We see thus that Ismail expended on works of public utility not less than forty-six millions sterling. Now, as the loans contracted by him netted only about forty-five millions, his admirers and defenders say at once that he did not squander, but that he spent all for the public weal. But there is the item of revenue, which these writers do not consider, and which yielded the government, in the sixteen years of Ismail's reign, not far from one hundred and fifty millions. How large a part of this was wasted by Ismail we can only guess; but we may be sure that all those millions did not go toward defraying necessary governmental expenses. The canals, railways, bridges, docks, *etc.*, were the best work of Ismail's reign if the financial side of the question be left out of consideration. They brought in, it is true, a certain revenue, but this was by no means equal to the interest on the debts incurred to make the improvements. Where national development is only secured by contracting with each change a counterbalancing debt, it is doubt-

¹ *Contemporary Review*, October, 1882.

ful if the changes can be considered beneficial. There were, however, certain other outlays by Ismail that were of unquestionable advantage to the land, even though they produced no revenue. He established 4,632 public schools, with 5,850 teachers, drawing salaries that ranged from £24 to £84 a year, and expended in the sixteen years of his reign no less than £3,600,000 for this purpose. He organized village banks—we will say with philanthropic intent to protect the fellahin from the money-lenders—and lost £900,000 by the experiment. And he lost largely on the shares he took in the Nile Steam Navigation Company. On the other hand, just at the time of the financial difficulties of 1873, he embarked upon a war with Abyssinia which despoiled the Egyptian treasury of not less than £3,000,000. He squandered a vast sum in building palaces and theatres and in the entertainment of distinguished foreigners. His expenditures at the time of the opening of the Suez canal were simply enormous. He gave bribes and presents at all times with true Oriental prodigality. Even if he could have afforded these outlays, they would have been foolish; as it was, they were wicked. And yet, as Mr. Mulhall says, “whatever the faults, he raised Egypt in the scale of nations”; for there was an actual progress between the death of Said and the accession of Tewfik. It may be measured in the following table, prepared by Mr. Mulhall:¹

PROGRESS OF EGYPT IN SEVENTEEN YEARS.

	LAST YEAR OF SAID PASHA. 1862.	LAST YEAR OF ISMAIL PASHA. 1879.
Acres tilled	4,052,000	5,425,000
Value of imports	£1,991,000	£5,410,000
Value of exports	£4,454,000	£13,810,000
Revenue	£4,937,000	£8,562,000
Public debt	£3,300,000	£98,540,000
Number of public schools	185	4,817
Railways—miles	275	1,185
Telegraphs “	630	5,820
Canals “	44,000	52,400
Population “	4,883,000	5,518,000

¹ *Contemporary Review*, October, 1882.

If from this table could be excluded that decidedly negative item of progress denoted by the public debt in 1879, there would remain a good showing for Ismail; but that one item cancels all the others, even as it was the primal cause of Ismail's overthrow.

There was another reform, which has not yet been noticed because bearing no direct relation to finances, that was accomplished during Ismail's reign, and for which he must, at least indirectly, be credited — the reform in judicial procedure. There had come to be a very pernicious increase of consular jurisdiction in Egypt after the death of Mehemet Ali. The native had to bring a suit against a foreigner in the foreigner's consulate, where he was almost sure to be denied justice. With as little chance of justice, also, the foreign plaintiff had to sue the foreign debtor in the latter's consulate. Some consuls even claimed the right to sit in judgment of cases in which the natives were defendants. The government suffered too. It was estimated, says Mr. McCoan,¹ that, in the four years preceding 1868, consular influence extorted from the government £2,880,000 in satisfaction of claims, without judicial sanction of any kind. "The whole system," he goes on to say, "was, in fact, a scandal and a denial of justice all around." It was, if anything, worse in criminal than in civil matters. The abuses were so flagrant that Nubar Pasha, in 1867, proposed a scheme of reform to the khédive. It was submitted to France, but was unfavorably received. England, however, when approached on the subject, promised to give the reform her hearty support, provided the other powers would concur. They did so in the fall of 1869. Negotiations, however, were interrupted for a time by the war between France and Germany; and when they were renewed, in 1871, the sultan entered his veto against the scheme, though he afterward withdrew it at the demand of England and Russia. France now offered objections once more, and the negotiations dragged. Some of her amendments were accepted; but it was not until December, 1875, that the scheme was finally agreed to.

¹ Egypt As It Is, p. 276.

The reform was inaugurated in February, 1876, to continue in force for five years. It is thus described by Mr. McCoan :¹

As now constituted the new system includes three tribunals of first instance — one at Alexandria, a second at Cairo, and a third . . . at Zagazig — and a Court of Appeal, which also sits at Alexandria. Of the inferior courts, that at Alexandria — divided into two chambers, with equal jurisdiction — consists of fourteen judges, of whom six are natives, and eight Europeans ; that at Cairo, of three natives and five foreigners ; and that at Zagazig, of three natives and four foreigners. The nominal chiefs of all three are natives, but foreign vice-presidents actually direct their proceedings. In the Court of Appeal the alien element is still more preponderant, the bench of eleven judges there consisting of seven foreigners and only four natives. . . . The judicial and other personnel is thus complete, and the jurisdiction exercised includes all civil disputes between the government and natives on the one hand, and foreigners on the other, as also those between foreigners of different nationalities ; and all suits and registrations of sale and mortgage whatsoever of real property.

Such was the reform inaugurated ; and a most excellent one it was. Not forgetting that Nubar was its author, we give the credit of it to Ismail's reign, just as we lay the blame of the mûffetish's villany at his door. If all his changes had been as wisely carried out, his ambitious designs of raising Egypt to the plane of European civilization would not have failed so utterly of realization. In this connection we must refer to Ismail's appointment, first of Sir Samuel Baker and then of Colonel Gordon, as governors-general of the Sûdan and of his apparently earnest attempts to suppress the slave trade. He gave Gordon unlimited power to "punish, change, and dismiss" officials, and assured him that Egypt would loyally support England in this "measure of humanity and civilization." We shall see later how Baker and Gordon succeeded in their missions.

Long before his collapse the shrewd Ismail must have known that his reign was doomed ; but he kept on his high-handed course to the end. The discharge of the European administrators and the virtual repudiation of debts were his last acts of

¹ Egypt As It Is, p. 280.

bravado. Powerless and empty-handed, he made no protest against the firman of deposition. But "it would be a mistake," writes Mr. Edward Dicey¹ "to attribute Ismail Pasha's collapse to lack of personal courage. I should doubt his possessing any exceptional physical bravery; but he had to a remarkable degree the gambler's instinct and the gambler's boldness. He was not the man to forfeit his stakes while there was a chance, however remote, of holding on to his winnings. He threw up the game simply and solely because he knew better than any one else that he had absolutely no cards in his hand." His people suffered him to depart into exile without a protest or a murmur. It is true that "the resident European community" — to quote Mr. Dicey's words once more — "to whom he had always been friendly, and who had partaken freely of his lavish hospitality, stood by him in his disgrace, and his departure into exile was accompanied by sincere expressions of regret on the part of the court circle and the European embassy, but without one solitary manifestation of sympathy on the part of the Egyptian population."

JOHN ELIOT BOWEN.

¹ *The Nineteenth Century*, February, 1880.